

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: West Virginia University Research Corp.

Application ID: 13AC144989

Program Name: Energy Express AmeriCorps

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

(+) The applicant has specifically identified the problem they seek to address, addressing a national issue of low-income students seeing a reduction in academic scores during summer months. They reference research illustrating how not attending school during summer vacation (called summer slide) negatively affects the ability of low-income children to achieve grade-level success; and additional documentation stating that cumulatively over the years this lack of summer learning will also result in fewer high school graduations or college enrollments among their targeted low-income youth.

(+) In order to meet the severe community need they plan to address in a multi-site program, the applicant explains the process of focusing on target populations of low-income students; they will ensure locations for program interventions are schools where at least 50% of children were approved for free and reduced meals.

(+) The applicant organization clearly documents why they selected the targeted population based on reduced lunch percentages.

(+) The applicant provides an exceptional description of how AmeriCorps Members will be allocated among the program components. They provide a very clear description of roles, Member distribution among local communities that have a measurable significant need, and specific examples through comprehensive descriptions of seasonal and daily responsibilities.

(+) The value of AmeriCorps members is well defined and clearly represents a highly effective means of solving the identified community problem to support low-income students in reading (academics) and nutrition through summer vacation. Among the outcomes related to the program goals and specifically defined by the applicant is successfully increasing of reading skills through program participation. Were it not for the Members and volunteers they recruit, the lack of such interventions might certainly be evident in that the program, Energy Express, since it is solely an AmeriCorps program.

(+) The applicant organization clearly documents the roles, responsibilities of the proposed AmeriCorps members by

presenting an hourly schedule. The first two weeks of member service include AmeriCorps orientation, pre-service training, site preparation, family visits, and recruiting volunteers. During the six weeks with children, members maintain contact with families and community stakeholders, continue training and reflection activities, and complete a visible community service project.

(+) The applicant organization clearly documents the need for all member slots requested for each site in order to implement the program at 80 sites across the state. 420 members serve as mentors who provide research-based literacy activities for more than 3,000 children and 80 members serve as community coordinators who recruit, train and supervise thousands of volunteers for more than 3,000 children.

(+) The applicant describes an evidence-informed strategy through the use of internal measures of gains in reading achievement through the use of strategies that align with the state Department of Education content standards. They describe how they measure their primary impact of reading skills achievement through pre- and post-testing using a noted standardized testing method.

(+) The applicant organization clearly documents how the proposed project will impact the community, participants and mentors.

(-) A significant portion of the statistical support for the applicant case is not up-to-date. For instance, some important poverty data presented are estimated amounts built from the U.S. Census before last and not the official *decennial* 2010 U.S. Census or later actual data. Student education standards results regarding their case to address economically disadvantage students are not referenced to any date in time. And as a result of the overall lack of current, relevant, and comprehensive community statistical data, the applicant has not made a credible case that the target community is economically disadvantaged.

(-) The applicant does not provide research or historically-based evidence relevant to the local target community supporting their premise of low-income student summer slide as described from the national information provided. It is not clear if the problem they seek to address is specifically present in the target community.

(-) The applicant organization does not document the severity of the need for the proposed targeted communities. No data is provided for test scores, no statistics of household with no high school diplomas, no data supporting failure or passing rate to the next grade level.

(-) The applicant organization does not document economic disadvantages of the proposed targeted population, no unemployment data provided.

(-) Other than to state that research-based strategies are used in language and reading programs offered, there is no program intervention citation or reference regarding the specific evidence-based curriculum they have used in the past or currently plan to employ.